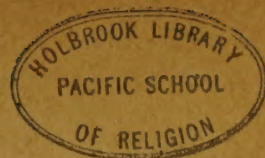


# The Christian News-Letter

Edited by  
J. H. OLDHAM



No. 168

JANUARY 13TH, 1943

**D**EAR MEMBER,

Less than a year has gone since F. C. Maxwell came to help us in our work. Reinforced by his abounding vitality we made the venture of launching the Christian Frontier Council, of which he was the life and soul. In a few months he had done more to lay foundations than any of us had thought to be possible. We were looking forward to the year 1943 with the highest hopes. On the Sunday after Christmas he was struck down by influenzal pneumonia and within twenty-four hours his bright and eager spirit had passed to the other side.

Max, as he was known to his friends, was born in 1909. He entered industry at an early age, but the call of the Church came to him. He took his degree at Leeds University, where he was a leading member both of the debating team and of the harriers—he was a powerful runner—and was ordained deacon in 1936, and priest the following year. After serving in a curacy at St. Luke's, Bermondsey, he joined the staff of the Student Christian Movement as industrial secretary, filling this office for three and a half years. He found there a job which evoked all his powers. His task was to help Christian students who were studying for engineering, metallurgy, textiles and other branches of industry to prepare themselves to fulfil their Christian responsibilities in these spheres. The work involved much travel to various universities and brought him into close contact with industrialists, trade union leaders, works and labour managers, and research workers. One of his colleagues in the Student Christian Movement writes:—

“At the annual universities' industrial conferences Max was in his element. The energy of his mind, his patience and courtesy with all, his insight into the real nature of the problems under discussion, and his great capacity for friendship with all sorts and conditions of men made him the centre of the life of a conference or discussion. He could go into a college or a university union, knowing no one, and leave a few hours later having made various friends, among both students and staff, who had caught something of his powerful enthusiasm. There were times when he came back from some strenuous tour of the universities looking very worn and tired. But in him the spirit was master of the body, and no tiredness was allowed to interfere with the next day's heavy work of dictating letters, 'phone calls, and numerous interviews. The range and variety of his contacts was immense.”

To the suggestion that he should come and help in launching the Christian Frontier Max responded immediately. The Student Christian Movement, with characteristic large-heartedness and generosity, agreed to release him as quickly as possible. His imagination was fired by the possibility of reinforcing the work of the Church by providing machinery that would make it possible for laymen to take counsel and action for the carrying out of the Christian purpose in the spheres in which their activity and responsibility lay. For this task to which he gave himself he possessed, as his friends knew, and many others were soon to discover, exceptional qualifications. He combined in a rare degree a strong purpose and tireless drive with a winning capacity of self-effacement. One of his outstanding qualities was his power to create for others opportunities of exercising their gifts. I have never been associated with anyone who was able more quickly to gain the confidence of people in all walks of life and, in particular, of those



accustomed to carry large responsibilities in public life. This ability was won at high cost. He made on this subject what was to his colleagues a revealing remark. It was suggested on one occasion that he had an exceptional flair for winning the confidence of people in leading positions, to which he replied: "You know, it isn't really flair. It is more a matter of midnight oil. I realized some years ago that if the Church was to be of any help in industry, it could only be on the basis of thorough knowledge and understanding, and I set myself to acquire it." What he was able to contribute was the result of long nights of concentrated study over a period of years. But all the hard work would not have sufficed to make him what he was had it not been united with a singular gift of sympathy and understanding in his dealing with people of all kinds.

He was an ideal colleague, full of understanding and considerateness. With decided judgments of his own, he was always eager and alert to have his views enriched, and where necessary corrected, by contributions from other minds, and was as much concerned that his colleagues should have every opportunity of exercising their individual gifts as that he should make his own maximum contribution to the common effort.

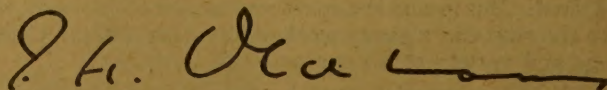
He was convinced, as we all were, that the work to be done could be effective only if it was rooted in an experience of real fellowship. The five of us who were carrying major whole-time responsibility in connection with the Christian Frontier and the Christian News-Letter decided to meet in conference for a week-end every month. These meetings drew us very close together. This letter has been written by his colleagues at the first of these meetings in the new year, at which until less than a week ago we had taken the presence of Max for granted.

Through Max's efforts a number of informal groups, as was reported recently in the News-Letter, were formed to consider policy and action in regard to various problems in the political, industrial and educational spheres. With the members of these he kept in constant touch, as well as with a much wider circle of many who were interested in, and could contribute to, the work of the groups.

The time has been too short to advance beyond the stage of ploughing and seed-sowing. In his brief hour of opportunity Max has cast seed into the ground. By whom and in what manner and with what fruitfulness the plants will be watered and tended we do not know. What we do know is that in this earthly life one plants, another waters and another reaps, and that it is God alone who gives the increase.

The writer of this week's Supplement is the assistant editor of the Christian News-Letter and an officer both of the Christian Frontier and of the British Council of Churches. After taking her degree at Girton in 1931 she went with her husband to India as a missionary, where she worked for seven years, and on her return to this country joined our staff.

Yours sincerely,



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